

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the Revocation)
or Suspension of the Educators) **CONSENT ORDER**
Certificate of Thomas Ray Pruett) **OF SUSPENSION**
Certificate # 196869)

GTK

The South Carolina State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on ^{May 13}~~April~~ 8, 2003. On September 5, 2002, the State Department of Education (Department) sent a notice of the possible suspension or revocation of his South Carolina Educators Certificate (certificate) to Thomas Ray Pruett by certified mail, return receipt requested delivery restricted to addressee. Mr. Pruett received the notice as evidenced by a signed postal receipt. Mr. Pruett initially requested a hearing, but through his attorney, Jay Bender, Esquire, subsequently agreed with the Department to the propose the following resolution of this matter to the State Board: (1) his license will be suspended for twelve months from the time of his resignation from employment on May 23, 2002, through May 22, 2003, and (2) the suspension will be reported to the NASDTEC Clearinghouse and all school districts in South Carolina as a suspension on the grounds of unprofessional conduct. After considering the evidence presented by the Department, the State Board voted to accept the resolution proposed by the parties.

Accepted
TRP
Initial Here
Thomas Ray
Pruett
#196869

APR 18 2003

FINDINGS OF FACT

Mr. Pruett holds a valid South Carolina certificate, and has over thirty years of teaching experience. He was under contract with Cherokee County School District (District) for the 2001-2002 school year as a teacher and coach at Blacksburg High School. A female student complained to another teacher that, on May 15, 2002, Mr. Pruett was "hitting on her." She alleged her called her "baby doll," hugged her and kissed her on the cheek. Mr. Pruett stated he meant only to be friendly and had no inappropriate intentions, but he did submit his resignation. A student, who witnessed the incident, stated she thought the encounter was casual and friendly. During the investigation into this incident, the


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District recalled that it received a letter from a parent in North Carolina in 1999 just after Mr. Pruett was hired. The parent alleged that Mr. Pruett kissed her daughter, who was a student, and asked her for a date. The District called his former principal in North Carolina, who confirmed that these allegations were made and that Mr. Pruett did resign at the end of the year.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

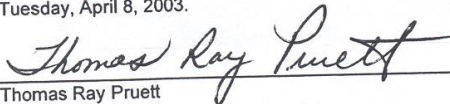
"The South Carolina State Board of Education may, for just cause, either revoke or suspend the certificate of any person." S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-150 (1990). Just cause includes: "unprofessional conduct", S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (1990); 24 S.C. Code Ann. Regulation 43-58 (1992). The State Board finds that the preponderance of the evidence presented by the Department, supports its decision to accept the proposal of the parties to suspend Mr. Pruett's teaching certificate from May 23, 2002, through May 22, 2003, on the terms and conditions outlined above.

South Carolina State Board of Education

By: 
Greg Killian
Chair

Columbia, South Carolina
~~May 13~~
~~April 8, 2003~~

I, Thomas Ray Pruett, SC Teaching Certificate # 196869, do hereby agree to the proposed Order of Suspension, consisting of two pages, and understand that this Order will be presented as signed to the State Board of Education on Tuesday, April 8, 2003.


Thomas Ray Pruett

4-8-2002
Date